

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 7378

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MC PO

SUBJECT: MACAU TALKS ON THE FUTURE OF TIMOR

SUMMARY: TALKS ON THE FUTURE OF TIMOR, HELD IN MACAU BETWEEN LISBON AUTHORITIES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF TWO OF TIMOR'S THREE POLITICAL PARTIES, UNDERSCORED PORTUGAL'S DETERMINATION TO PUSH AHEAD WITH ITS DECOLONIZATION PROGRAM. ALTHOUGH NEITHER LISBON NOR THE TWO TIMOR PARTIES AT THE TALKS SEEMED COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING, THE CHOICE OF MACAU AS THE VENUE SERVED TO HIGHLIGHT THAT TINY ENCLAVE'S SPECIAL STATUS AS WELL AS LISBON'S DESIRE TO PURSUE FORMAL DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH PEKING. END SUMMARY

1. THREE-DAY TALKS ON THE FUTURE OF TIMOR FINALLY GOT UNDERWAY IN MACAU ON JUNE 26 DESPITE THE DECISION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY FRONT FOR AN INDEPENDENT TIMOR (FRETELIN), ONE OF TIMOR'S THREE POLITICAL PARTIES, TO BOYCOTT THE TALKS AND DELAYS CAUSED BY PORTUGUESE OFFICIALS' PARTICIPATION IN UN SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION MEETINGS IN LISBON. THE FOLLOW-
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ING REPORT IS BASED ON PRESS REPORTS OF THE TALKS AND

DISCUSSION WITH AN AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMAT WHO WAS IN MACAU TO FOLLOW, AS BEST HE COULD, THE TALKS WHICH WERE HELD BEHIND CLOSED DOORS.

2. THE PORTUGUESE DELEGATION REPORTEDLY CAME PREPARED WITH DRAFT PROPOSALS ON DECOLONIZATION TO PRESENT TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR POPULAR DEMOCRACY IN TIMOR (APODETI) WHICH FAVORS INTEGRATION WITH INDONESIA AND DELEGATES OF THE DEMOCRATIC UNION OF TIMOR (UDT) WHICH, IN CONTRAST TO FRETILIN'S STANCE, DESIRES INDEPENDENCE NOT IMMEDIATELY BUT WITHIN FOUR TO FIVE YEARS.

3. THE TALKS CLEARLY UNDERScoreD LISBON'S DETERMINATION TO PROCEED WITH ITS DECOLONIZATION PLANS FOR TIMOR, AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT THE ULTIMATE DECISIONS CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH PLANS RESIDE WITH PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES. LISBON OFFICIALS REPORTEDLY HELD SEPARATE TALKS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO PARTIES BEFORE ALL PARTICIPANTS MET TO DRAFT A FORMAL COMMUNIQUE. AGREEMENT WAS REACHED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR THE ELECTION OF A POPULAR ASSEMBLY TO DECIDE ON THE FUTURE OF TIMOR. THIS AGREEMENT IS SUBJECT TO FINAL APPROVAL BY LISBON'S RULING COUNCIL, BUT THE PORTUGUESE REPRESENTATIVES ARE HOPEFUL THAT A SIX-MAN GOVERNMENT WITH FULL EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE POWERS CAN BE SET UP WITHIN A MONTH AFTER SUCH APPROVAL. THE PROPOSED-GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY WILL INCLUDE THE PORTUGUESE HIGH COMMISSIONER AND LISBON APPOINTEES AS WELL AS MEMBERS SELECTED FROM THE TIMOR POLITICAL PARTIES.

4. DESPITE PORTUGUESE OFFICIALS' FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS, NONE OF THE PARTIES ARE TOTALLY SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE TALKS. THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE EXPRESSED REGRET AT THE FRETILIN DECISION NOT TO PARTICIPATE, WHICH PREVENTED NEGOTIATIONS ON THE MODALITIES AND IN PARTICULAR SETTING OF A TIMETABLE FOR THE END OF PORTUGUESE RULE IN TIMOR. THE PORTUGUESE DELEGATION WAS UNABLE TO RETURN HOME WITH A CONSENSUS WHICH COULD BE PRESENTED TO LISBON AUTHORITIES. UDT FELT THAT ABSENCE OF DELEGATES FROM FRETILIN, WHICH ENJOYS POPULAR SUPPORT SECOND ONLY TO THE UDT, WEAKENED THE HAND OF THOSE FAVORING INDEPENDENCE BUT WAS NOT DISPLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME. LISBON'S REJECTION OF A REFERENDUM WHICH UDT OPPOSED, DASHED APODETI'S HOPES. THREE OF APODETI'S SEVEN DELEGATES OPENLY EXPRESSING THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT LEFT MACAU FOR HONG KONG WHILE TALKS WERE STILL IN PROGRESS. HOWEVER, THE PORTUGUESE SPOKESMAN NOTED THE "POSITIVE SPIRIT" OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

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5. THE MACAU TALKS ELICITED LITTLE ATTENTION IN HONG KONG OR MACAU, THEREBY CONFIRMING THE PORTUGUESE FORMIN'S PRE-MEETING

STATEMENT THAT MACAU WAS CHOSEN AS THE SITE NOT BECAUSE OF THE CITY'S PROXIMITY TO TIMOR BUT BECAUSE "IT IS A TERRITORY WHICH GIVES US A PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE." PORTUGAL'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CHINA, HOWEVER, WAS A FACTOR IN THE DECISION TO PICK MACAU. PORTUGUESE OFFICIALS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFER TO MACAU'S SPECIAL STATUS, TO REITERATE THEIR DESIRE TO ESTABLISH FORMAL LINKS WITH THE PRC, AND TO NOTE THAT SINO-PORTUGUESE TALKS WERE "PROGRESSING." ALTHOUGH WE ARE UNABLE AT THIS TIME TO CONFIRM NEWS REPORTS THAT PRIVATE TALKS ON DIPLOMATIC TIES TOOK PLACE IN MACAU, WE NOTE THAT THE MOST PROMINENT SPOKESMAN FOR PEKING'S INTERESTS IN THAT COLONY, HO YIN, ENTERTAINED ALL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE MACAU CONFAB.

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